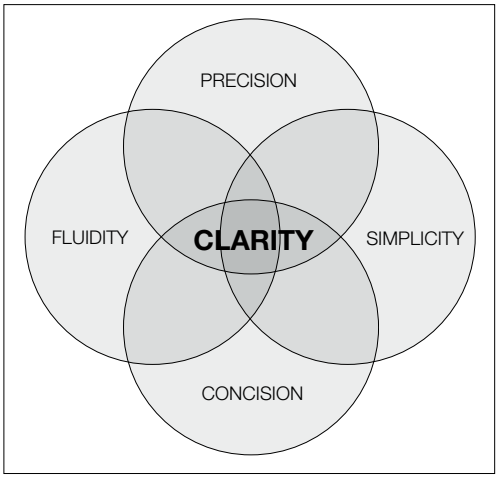
2.2. Clarity

In language, clarity is everything.
Confucious

The defining characteristic of good scientific writing is clarity. Clear writing reflects clear thinking.

The following diagram shows four basic aspects of scientific style that have an impact on clarity. Although we will deal with each aspect separately, bear in mind that they are interrelated and there is considerable overlap among them.



Major aspects related to clarity

Working to make your text more precise will help to ensure it flows smoothly. On the other hand, working to make your text flow smoothly can help you find ambiguities and thus make your text more precise. Similarly, working to make your text concise can help to eliminate unnecessary complexity. On the other hand, simplifying a text nearly always shortens it.

Each of the following sections in this book deals with one of these characteristics, presenting strategies and advice for tackling common problems and pitfalls that can prevent you from achieving that characteristic and thus from achieving your final goal of being clear.